

**WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE
SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN
(MSHCP) FOCUSED BURROWING OWL
SURVEYS FOR THE 10.38-ACRE LOST
RANCH WINERY PROJECT SITE**

**APN 942-030-007
UNINCORPORATED
RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Prepared for:

**Riverside County
Environmental Programs Department
4080 Lemon Street, 12th Floor
Riverside, California 92501**

Project Proponent:

**Joseph and Jasmine Wiens
c/o 4M Engineering and Development, Inc.
41635 Enterprise Circle North, Suite B
Temecula, California 92590**

Prepared by:

**Ruben S. Ramirez, Jr.
Cadre Environmental
c/o Brian F. Smith and Associates, Inc.
14010 Poway Road, Suite A
Poway, California 92064**



August 24, 2021



INFORMATION SUMMARY

- A. Report Date: August 24th, 2021
- B. Report Title: Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys for the 10.38-Acre Lost Ranch Winery Project Site, Unincorporated Western Riverside County, California.
- C. APN#: 942-030-007. Potential Offsite Impact Area, Right of Ways.
- D. Project Location: USGS 7.5' Bachelor Mountain Quadrangle, Township 7 South, Range 2 West, Section 24, South of Rancho California Road and Northeast of Glen Oaks Road, as shown in Attachment A, *Project Site Map*.
- E. Applicant Rep: Brian F. Smith and Associates, Inc.
14010 Poway Road, Suite A
Poway, CA 92064
Contact: Brian Smith (858) 484-0915
- F. MOU Principal: Cadre Environmental
701 Palomar Airport Road, Suite 300,
Carlsbad, CA. 92011
Contact: Ruben S. Ramirez, Jr. (949) 300-0212
USFWS permit #TE780566-14, CDFW permit #02243
- G. Date of Surveys: August 5th, 7th, 8th, 21st, and 22nd, 2021.
- H. Summary: The 10.38-acre property (0.81-acre potential offsite impact area) is located within the MSHCP Southwest Area Plan. The project site is not located within an MSHCP Criteria Area, Cell Group, or Linkage Area.
- The project site is characterized primarily as agriculture (recently planted vineyards) and disturbed habitat as shown in Attachment, B *Vegetation Communities Map*, and Attachments C to E, *Current Project Site Photographs*.
- The MSHCP has determined that all of the sensitive species potentially occurring onsite have been adequately covered (MSHCP Table 2-2 Species Considered for Conservation Under the

MSHCP Since 1999, 2004). However, additional surveys may be required wildlife species if suitable habitat is documented onsite and/or if the property is located within a predetermined “Survey Area” (MSHCP 2004).

The project site occurs almost completely within a predetermined Survey Area for the burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) as shown in Attachment C, *MSHCP Relationship Map*. Suitable burrowing owl foraging habitat was documented within and adjacent to the project site. Although no burrows potentially utilized for refugia and/or nesting were documented within the property, focused MSHCP burrowing owl surveys were conducted during the summer of 2021 to determine the presence/absence and status of the species within and adjacent to the project site.

No burrowing owl or characteristic sign such as white-wash, feathers, tracks, or pellets were detected within or immediately adjacent to the project site during the 2021 survey effort.

A 30-day pre-construction survey for burrowing owls is required prior to initial ground-disturbing activities (e.g. vegetation clearing, clearing and grubbing, tree removal, site watering) to ensure that no owls have colonized the site in the days or weeks preceding the ground-disturbing activities. If burrowing owls have colonized the project site prior to the initiation of ground-disturbing activities, the project proponent will immediately inform the Wildlife Agencies and the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), and will need to coordinate further with RCA and the Wildlife Agencies, including the possibility of preparing a Burrowing Owl Protection and Relocation Plan, prior to initiating ground disturbance. If ground-disturbing activities occur but the site is left undisturbed for more than 30 days, a pre-construction survey will again be necessary to ensure burrowing owl has not colonized the site since it was last disturbed. If burrow owl is found, the same coordination described above will be necessary.

SUBJECT

Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys for the 10.38-Acre (0.81-Acre Potential Offsite Impact Area) Lost Ranch Winery Project Site, Unincorporated Western Riverside County, California.

This report presents the findings of focused Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) burrowing owl surveys conducted for the 10.38-acre (0.81-acre potential offsite impact area) Lost Ranch Winery project site “Project Site” located within the unincorporated region of western Riverside County, California. Specifically, the Project Site is located within Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 949-030-007: Potential Offsite Impact Area, Right of Ways.

The Project Site is located within United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5’ Series Bachelor Mountain Quadrangle, Township 7 South, Range 2 West, Section 24. Specifically, the Project Site extends south of Rancho California Road and northeast of Glen Oaks Road, as shown in Attachment A, *Project Site Map*.

The Project Site is located within the MSHCP Southwest Area Plan. The Project Site is not located within an MSHCP Criteria Area, Cell Group, or Linkage Area.

This report incorporates the findings of a literature review, compilation of existing documentation, and a field reconnaissance and focused surveys conducted on August 5th, 7th, 8th, 21st, and 22nd, 2021.

This documentation is consistent with accepted scientific and technical standards and the requirements of the MSHCP. When appropriate, general biological resources are described in summary form in an effort to provide the reader with adequate background information.

METHODS OF STUDY

APPROACH

Prior to visiting the Project Site, a review of all available and relevant data on the biological characteristics, sensitive habitats, and species potentially present on or adjacent to the Project Site was conducted. Additionally, aerial photography, and USGS topographic map data were examined. After reviewing the available information, Cadre Environmental conducted a physical site assessment/burrow and focused survey.

As required by the MSHCP, and during the initial property assessment process, the Project Site APN was searched using the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) GIS database to determine if additional surveys for wildlife not adequately covered by the

MSHCP may be required. The Project Site is located completely within a predetermined Survey Area for the burrowing owl.

Plant Community/Habitat Classification and Mapping

Plant communities were preliminarily mapped with the aid of an aerial photograph using the MSHCP uncollapsed vegetation communities classification system. When a vegetation community could not be accurately characterized using this classification system, an updated community classification code was developed to more accurately represent onsite habitat types.

General Wildlife Inventory

All animals identified during the reconnaissance survey by sight, call, tracks, scat, or other characteristic sign were recorded onto a 1:200 scale orthorectified color aerial photograph or documented using a global positioning system (GPS). In addition to species actually detected, expected use of the site by other wildlife was derived from the analysis of habitats on the site, combined with known habitat preferences of regionally occurring wildlife species.

Vertebrate taxonomy followed in this report is according to the Center for North American Herpetology (2021 for amphibians and reptiles), the American Ornithologists' Union (1988 and supplemental) for birds, and Baker et al. (2003) for mammals. Both common and scientific names are used during the first mention of a species; common names only are used in the remainder of the text.

Burrowing Owl Surveys

In accordance with the MSHCP Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions (2006), survey protocol consists of two steps, Step I – Habitat Assessment and Step II – Locating Burrows and Burrowing Owls. Step II is comprised of two parts, Part A: Focused Burrow Surveys and Part B: Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys.

Each step is briefly outlined below, followed by the methodology and results of each survey conducted within the Project Site. All initial habitat assessment, burrow and focused surveys were conducted by Ruben Ramirez.

Surveys were conducted during weather that is conducive to observing owls outside their burrows and detecting burrowing owl sign. Surveys were not conducted during rain, high winds (> 20 mph), dense fog, or temperatures over 90 °F. None of the surveys were conducted within five (5) days of measurable precipitation.

In addition to the MSHCP guidelines, field notes were taken daily. These notes recorded the date, location, animal species observed, and general habitat characteristics of each area and habitat examined that day.

Step I – Habitat Assessment

Step 1 of the MSHCP habitat assessment for burrowing owl consists of a walking survey to determine if suitable habitat is present onsite. Cadre Environmental conducted the habitat assessment on August 5th, 2021. Upon arrival at the Project Site, and prior to initiating the assessment survey, Cadre Environmental used binoculars to scan all suitable habitats on and adjacent to the property, including perch locations, to ascertain owl presence.

All suitable areas of the Project Site were surveyed on foot by walking slowly and methodically while recording/mapping areas that may represent suitable owl habitat onsite. Primary indicators of suitable burrowing owl habitat in western Riverside County include, but are not limited to, native and non-native grassland, interstitial grassland within shrub lands, shrub lands with low density shrub cover, golf courses, drainage ditches, earthen berms, unpaved airfields, pastureland, dairies, fallow fields, and agricultural use areas. Burrowing owls typically use burrows made by fossorial mammals, such as ground squirrels (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*) or badgers (*Taxidea taxus*), but they often utilize man-made structures, such as earthen berms, cement culverts, cement, asphalt, rock, or wood debris piles, or openings beneath cement or asphalt pavement. Burrowing owls are often found within, under, or in close proximity to man-made structures.

According to the MSHCP guidelines, if suitable habitat is present the biologist should also walk the perimeter of the property, which consists of a 150-meter (approximately 500 feet) buffer zone around the Project Site boundary. If permission to access the buffer area cannot be obtained, the biologist shall not trespass, but visually inspect adjacent habitats with binoculars.

Suitable burrowing owl foraging habitat was documented within and adjacent to the project site. Although no burrows potentially utilized for refugia and/or nesting were documented within the property, focused MSHCP burrowing owl surveys were conducted during the summer of 2021 to determine the presence/absence and status of the species within and adjacent to the Project Site.

Step II – Locating Burrows and Burrowing Owls

Concurrent with the initial habitat assessment, a detailed focused burrow survey was conducted and included documentation of appropriately sized natural burrows or suitable man-made structures that may be utilized by burrowing owl - as part of the MSHCP protocol, which is described below under Part A. Focused Burrow Survey. The MSHCP protocol indicated that no more than 100 acres should be surveyed per day/per biologist.

Part A: Focused Burrow Survey

A systematic survey for burrows, including burrowing owl sign, was conducted by walking across all suitable habitats mapped within the Project Site on August 5th, 2021.

Pedestrian survey transects were spaced to allow 100% visual coverage of the ground surface. The distances between transect centerlines were no more than 20 meters (approximately 66 ft.) apart, and owing to the terrain, often much smaller. Transect routes were also adjusted to account for topography and in general ground surface visibility.

All observations of suitable burrows or dens, natural or man-made, or sightings of burrowing owl, were recorded and mapped during the survey.

Part B: Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys

Four (4) focused burrowing owl surveys (in addition to the initial focused burrow survey – Step II, Part A) were conducted on August 7th, 8th, 21st, and 22nd, 2021 from one hour before sunrise to two hours after sunrise as outlined in Table 1, *Burrowing Owl Survey Schedule*. During visual surveys, all potentially suitable burrow or structure entrances were investigated for signs of owl occupation, such as feathers, tracks, or pellets, and carefully observed to determine if burrowing owls utilize these features, when present. All burrows are monitored at a short distance from the entrance, and at a location that would not interfere with potential owl behavior, when present. In addition to monitoring potential burrow locations, all suitable habitats in the Project Site were walked along transects averaging 20 meters (approximately 66 feet) between centerlines as shown in Attachment F, *Burrowing Owl Survey Area Map*.

**Table 1.
 Burrowing Owl Survey Schedule**

Survey	Dates (Conditions) 2021 Start – End Times	Results
1	August 7th 68°F to 74°F, winds 0-4 mph, no rain 6:30am – 7:30am	No burrowing owls or characteristic sign detected within the Project Site.
2	August 8th 70°F to 75°F, winds 2-8 mph, no rain 6:30am – 7:30am	No burrowing owls or characteristic sign detected within the Project Site.
3	August 21st 70°F to 74°F, winds 2-4 mph, no rain 6:30am – 7:30am	No burrowing owls or characteristic sign detected within the Project Site.
4	August 22nd 69°F to 76°F, winds 0-4 mph, no rain 6:30am – 7:30am	No burrowing owls or characteristic sign detected within the Project Site.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Project Site is centered around a gently sloping hilltop and is currently dominated by recently planted vineyards (agriculture) and disturbed habitat as illustrated in Attachment, B *Vegetation Communities Map*, Attachments C to E, *Current Project Site Photographs*, and outlined in Table 2, *Project Site Vegetation Community Acreages*.

Table 2
Project Site Vegetation Community Acreages

Vegetation Community	Project Site (ac)	Potential Offsite (ac)	TOTAL Project Site (ac)
Agriculture (active vineyards)	4.83	--	1.83
Disturbed	5.55	0.81	6.36
TOTAL	10.38	0.81	11.19

Source: Cadre Environmental 2021.

Agriculture (Vineyards)

A portion of the Project Site was recently planted with grape (*Vitis* sp.) vineyards. The understory is either devoid of vegetation or dominated by disturbed vegetation as described below.

Disturbed

The disturbed regions of the Project Site are dominated by puncture vine (*Tribulus terrestris*), tumbling pigweed (*Amaranthus albus*), doveweed (*Croton setigerus*), vinegar weed (*Trichostema lanceolatum*), telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*), common purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*), riggut grass (*Bromus diandrus*), foxtail chess (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*), wild oat (*Avena fatua*), red-stemmed filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), white-stemmed filaree (*Erodium moschatum*), tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*), horseweed (*Erigeron canadensis*), Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), and common fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii*).

RESULTS

No burrowing owl or characteristic sign such as white-wash, feathers, tracks, or pellets were detected within or immediately adjacent to the Project Site during the summer 2021 MSHCP focused survey efforts.

General wildlife species documented onsite or within the vicinity during the site visits include red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), and Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*).

A 30-day pre-construction survey for burrowing owls is required prior to initial ground-disturbing activities (e.g. vegetation clearing, clearing and grubbing, tree

removal, site watering) to ensure that no owls have colonized the site in the days or weeks preceding the ground-disturbing activities. If burrowing owls have colonized the project site prior to the initiation of ground-disturbing activities, the project proponent will immediately inform the Wildlife Agencies and the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), and will need to coordinate further with RCA and the Wildlife Agencies, including the possibility of preparing a Burrowing Owl Protection and Relocation Plan, prior to initiating ground disturbance. If ground-disturbing activities occur but the site is left undisturbed for more than 30 days, a pre-construction survey will again be necessary to ensure burrowing owl has not colonized the site since it was last disturbed. If burrow owl is found, the same coordination described above will be necessary.

REFERENCES

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB). 2021a. Sensitive Element Record Search for the Bachelor Mountain Quadrangle. California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Sacramento, California. Accessed August 2021.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). 2021b. Special Animals. Natural Heritage Division, Natural Diversity Data Base.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2012. Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation, State of California Natural Resources Agency.
- County of Riverside. 2006. Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions – Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area.
- Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP) Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), March 2004.

ATTACHMENTS

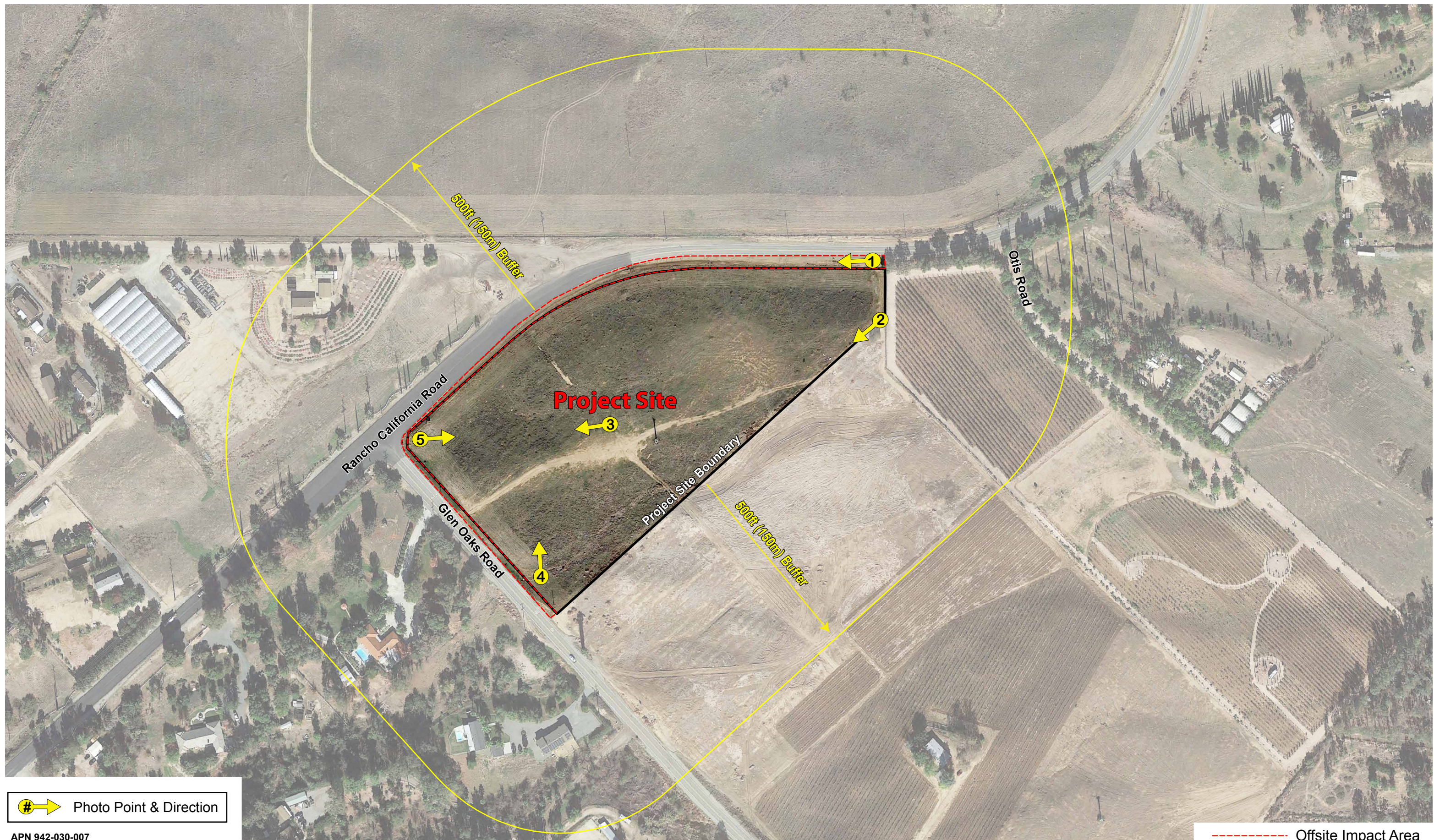
- A – Project Site Map
- B – Vegetation Communities Map
- C – Current Project Site Photographs
- D – Current Project Site Photographs
- E – Current Project Site Photographs
- F – Burrowing Owl Survey Map

Certification

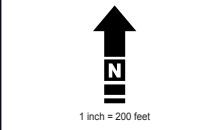
“I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits present the data and information required for this biological evaluation, and that the facts, statements, and information presented are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief”

Author:  Date: August 24th, 2021

Fieldwork Performed By:  Date: August 24th, 2021



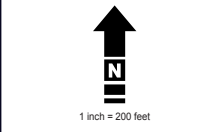
Attachment A - Project Site Map
 MSHCP Burrowing Owl Surveys
 Lost Ranch Winery Project





APN 942-030-007

Attachment B - Vegetation Communities Map
 MSHCP Burrowing Owl Surveys
 Lost Ranch Winery Project





PHOTOGRAPH 1



PHOTOGRAPH 2

Refer to Attachment A - Project Site Map



PHOTOGRAPH 3



PHOTOGRAPH 4

Refer to Attachment A - Project Site Map



PHOTOGRAPH 5

Refer to Attachment A - Project Site Map

Attachment E - Current Project Site Photographs
MSHCP Burrowing Owl Surveys
Lost Ranch Winery Project





APN 942-030-007

Attachment F - Burrowing Owl Survey Area Map
 MSHCP Burrowing Owl Surveys
 Lost Ranch Winery Project

